United Nations

Daily Highlights

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WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Secretary-General, on second day of his visit to India, holds talks with Indian Ministers about developments in Afghanistan, United Nations peace-keeping in Yugoslavia and Cambodia, Rio Earth Summit in June, among other things.

+ While tension in Sarajevo continues, Secretary-General approves early deployment of unarmed military observers to Mostar, in Hercegovina, to liaise with local communities and use good offices to reduce tension.

+ Icelandic Red Cross nurse working in Afghanistan killed in Maydan Shar, south of Kabul, according to report by International Committee of the Red Cross.

+ Secretary-General's Special Representative for Cambodia, Yasushi Akashi, cites progress towards comprehensive solution to conflict in Kompong Thom region.

+ Disarmament Commission concludes general debate, hearing views on transparency in armaments, nuclear arms reduction and impact of scientific developments on security, among other things.

+ World Food Programme provides additional food aid to Myanmar refugees in Bangladesh.

+ Beginning first session at Headquarters, Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice hears address by Director-General of United Nations Office at Vienna.

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On the second day of his visit to India, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali today met with the Foreign Minister of India, J.N. Dixit, with whom he discussed various matters including developments in Afghanistan and the role of the United Nations - political and economic - in the changing

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world situation. They also discussed the United Nations peace-keeping operations in Cambodia and Yugoslavia, and the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in June.

The Secretary-General also held talks with Indian Minister of State for External Affairs, Eduardo Faleiro, on the role of the United Nations in the light of the declaration adopted at the Security Council Summit in January, as well as the role of regional bodies and United Nations specialized agencies. Views were exchanged on such issues as Cambodia, the Middle East and Libya.

At a lunch held in the Secretary-General's honour, Mr. Faleiro welcomed Mr. Boutros-Ghali as the new Secretary-General at a time when the United Nations was in a unique position to advance the cause of international co-operation. The Minister saw a need for the democratization of the United Nations, not merely by expansion of the membership of the Security Council, but also by ensuring that legality was maintained in international relations across the board.

Mr. Boutros-Ghali, in his response, noted India's contribution over the years to the United Nations and expressed his deep appreciation for the role this country continued to play in support of the Organization. Both India and the United Nations were committed to end conflicts that "have scarred our planet too long", he said, adding that progress to this end would require great perseverance and skill.

In the evening, the Secretary-General met with Minister of Defence Sharad Pawar for a discussion on various United Nations peace-keeping operations and the situation in the region. Mr. Boutros-Ghali thanked the Minister for his country's contribution to peace-keeping, most recently in El Salvador, Yugoslavia and Cambodia.

The Secretary-General will meet with the Indian Prime Minister later this evening.

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In an acceleration of the role of the military observer unit, Commander Satish Nambiar of the United Nations Protection Force in Yugoslavia (UNPROFOR) has recommended early deployment of observers in the Mostar area. The Secretary-General has approved the proposal, which will be implemented beginning 30 April, according to Spokesman François Giuliani.

The United Nations observers will operate in several municipalities in the region. Their mission will be to actively patrol in those areas, establishing close liaison with local communities and using their good offices to reduce tension. The observers will work in ten-man teams and will conduct 11 patrols daily. They will be unarmed.

Under the original United Nations Plan, observers were to be deployed to part of Bosnia-Hercegovina only after the demilitarization of the United Nations Protected Areas (UNPAs). The change represents an adjustment in the

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timetable, not an expansion of the mandate of the United Nations Protection Force.

After demilitarization of the Protected Areas, United Nations military observers are expected to be deployed to the Bihac and Dubrovnik areas as well.

In a related development, the Spokesman for UNPROFOR, Fred Eckhard, confirmed earlier today that 60 patients had been evacuated from an hospital on fire outside of Sarajevo by a team of the Force from Sweden, to be transported to another hospital in that city.

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The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) reported today that Jan Karlsson, a 39-year old Icelandic Red Cross nurse working in Afghanistan, was killed today in Maydan Shar, south of Kabul.

Mr. Karlsson was attending two wounded Afghans who had been evacuated from the Sheikhabad first-aid post. A crowd gathered around the ICRC vehicles after the wounded men had been taken aboard. A man in the crown fired at Jan Karlsson, who was killed instantly.

The ICRC reported that on the previous day, delegates had discussed the medical evacuation with local leaders and had received all the necessary safety guarantees. The Committee said that in the present climate of political and military upheaval in Afghanistan, the Red Cross was stepping up security measures and was doing everything possible to obtain satisfactory security guarantees from all parties concerned.

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The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Cambodia, Yasushi Akashi, today announced that there has been a steady progression towards a comprehensive solution to the conflict in Kompong Thom. Progress had been reached through the establishment of the local mixed military working group in the region on 30 March.

Mr. Akashi said the constant dialogue between all factions on the issue had led to detailed reconnaissance of the area of contention. The reception by the villagers in areas controlled by all factions was extremely hospitable and reflected their enthusiasm and eagerness for the arrival of the United Nations, he reported. The UNTAC team distributed Khmer language copies of the Paris Agreements and mine signs to enable the people to begin delineating the danger areas. Further discussions and combined planning by all factions will continue until final agreement on all details can be reached.

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The importance of removing the threat posed by the current level of armaments was stressed by several delegates, as the Disarmament Commission ended its general exchange of views for the current session, yesterday evening.

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Some speakers said highest priority should be given to the elimination of nuclear weapons. A number of representatives said the Commission members must exercise cooperation and compromise if the forum were to continue to contribute to the disarmament process.

Among the speakers yesterday, the representative of the Russian Federation, Boris P. Krasulin, said his delegation had taken its seat for the first time. One of the top priorities for Russia was to identify its place in the maintenance and strengthening of international peace and security, in particular in the light of its special responsibility as a permanent member of the Security Council. As a successor to the former Soviet Union, Russia confirmed all its obligations under the existing bilateral and multilateral treaties and agreements signed in the fields of arms control and disarmament.

Speakers during the general debate termed regional disarmament an integral part of the entire process of arms reduction. The international community was urged to concentrate on how regional initiatives could help promote efforts at the global level and how developments at the global or extra-regional level could affect regional efforts.

The Commission will end its session on 11 May.

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The World Food Programme (WFP) today announced it will provide an additional 20,000 metric tons of emergency food aid to some 200,000 refugees from Myanmar who are now in south-east Bangladesh. The refugees are members of the minority Rohingya Muslim ethnic group who fled their country to escape civil conflict which began towards the end of 1991.

The provision of this emergency food assistance was jointly approved by the Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Edouard Saouma, and the Executive Director of WFP, Catherine Bertini.

With social tension inside Myanmar continuing, the influx into Bangladesh is likely to intensify. About 2,000 people are crossing daily into Bangladesh and, according to WFP, the refugees will require food assistance for the next six months.

The increase in the number of refugees, from 70,000 in January to 200,000 today, has had a serious impact on the relief assistance being provided to the refugees. Food supplies are running short faster than originally planned in view of the increased caseload, and health conditions in the camps are becoming precarious.

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Criminal justice must be carried out with full respect for human rights and legal guarantees, said Giorgio Giacomelli, Director-General of the United

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Nations Office at Vienna, at the opening of the first session of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice yesterday in the Austrian capital.

While the United Nations could not act as a world policeman, he said, it could help to mitigate conflicts, forestall potential victimization and help protect victims, particularly by providing technical assistance and advisory services.

The Commission, which elected Wonu Folami (Nigeria) as its Chairman, is scheduled to conclude its session on 30 April. Established in February with a mandate to develop, monitor and review the United Nations Programme on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, it replaces the Committee on Crime Prevention and Control.

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